



Beniamino GIGLI

New York Recordings 1927-28

DONIZETTI

THOMAS

MEYERBEER

BIZET

MASCAGNI

PONCHIELLI

VERDI

Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957)

The Gigli Edition Vol. 5 • Camden and New York Recordings 1927-28

With Victor's introduction of the electric process in 1925, the reproduction of voices and, particularly, of orchestral accompaniments improved markedly. As one would expect, there was an upsurge in record production as the new method found an eager public. The new system produced both an expansion of repertory and a desire to provide new, improved versions of some of the old acoustic best-sellers.

Among Gigli's experimental electrics are a two-sided version of the *Lucia* 'Tomb Scene' (Naxos 8.110264). The first of these comprises both the accompanied recitative, *Tombe degl'avi miei* and the ensuing cantabile, *Fra poco a me ricovero*. To fit this much material on a single twelve-inch makes for a rather hurried but still quite expressive disc. The second side contained the *cabaletta*, *Tu che a Dio*, here shorn of the transition between the two statements of the melody. Two years later this material was re-recorded complete, with the addition of Pinza in the important phrases of Raimondo, and the Metropolitan Opera Chorus, the whole scene encompassed three sides. Edgardo was a rôle that Gigli sang 21 times at the Met, and it is one that suits his heart-on-the-sleeve approach especially well. The varied moods of the recitative are nicely differentiated, culminating in the beautiful *mezza voce* of the closing phrase before the final expansiveness: '*Tu delle gioie in seno, io, della morte*'. Donizetti never wrote more expressively for a tenor than in *Fra poco a me ricovero*, and Gigli makes the most of it. This 1927 *Tu che a Dio* is particularly fine, enriched as it is with Pinza's plangent contribution.

In its advertising the Victor Red Seal line had always featured combinations of the prominent singers of the day in various ensembles. The *Lucia* Sextet and the *Rigoletto* Quartet had sold well even at advanced prices and were obvious candidates for new electric

versions. One of the convenient aspects of such a project was that the same four singers for the Verdi ensemble could serve, with the addition of a bass and a second tenor, for the Donizetti. These projects traditionally made a feature of the tenor, as the quartet begins with the Duke's solo, and Edgardo, along with the baritone Enrico, starts off the first section of the sextet.

What would be more natural then than to plan these new recordings around Gigli, currently the star Italian tenor of the Victor stable, and to use Galli-Curci, a veteran of the 1917 versions with the late Caruso (the soprano having proven herself in the intervening decade something of a gold mine for Victor). Louise Homer, then in her mid-fifties and even more of a veteran (her first Red Seals had been made in 1903), was currently (in 1927) enjoying a sort of postscript to her distinguished career. Giuseppe De Luca had sung the baritone parts with Caruso and Galli-Curci in Victor's last project with these ensembles in 1917. To these four were added the then-recent arrival in the United States, Ezio Pinza, and that prince of comprimarios, Angelo Bada.

In the electric *Rigoletto* Quartet Gigli is a mellifluous Duke, seductive in tone but without seeming even slightly urgent in his pursuit of Sparafucile's sister. Galli-Curci is a sweetly cautious Gilda here; Homer, a rock-solid but not very suggestive Maddalena; De Luca, in his best *bel canto* form. All in all, this is a pretty concert reading devoid of any suggestion of drama. Gigli is more involved in the *Lucia* ensemble, singing with a sense of text and sounding quite brilliant on the series of B flats when he doubles the soprano line near the end. There is some loss of momentum in the middle section (where all six begin to sing), which seems largely attributable to Galli-Curci: her *fil di voce* trepidation – though

justifiable here in the drama – seems to stem instead from her rather precarious vocal condition at this point in her career.

In 1926 Gigli had recorded three duets with Titta Ruffo from *La forza del destino*, *La Bohème* and *La Gioconda* (Naxos 8.110265). The following year these three duets were remade, this time with De Luca. An Italian version of the Act 1 *Pearl Fishers* duet was also sung by the pair to fill two double-sided 78s. Although a year older than Ruffo, De Luca had a keen sense of vocal proportion, unlike his injudicious predecessor in these numbers; indeed De Luca could still sing creditably into his seventh decade. To contrast his singing of the phrases beginning *Amasti un dì una vergine* in the *Gioconda* duet with Ruffo's is to set vocal art against bluff. Gigli establishes just the right tone of dreamy nostalgia for the big tune in the *Pescatore* duet, and here his control of dynamics is remarkable. The fine-tuned performances of the *Bohème* and *Forza* numbers are testimony to the two singers' frequent collaborations at the Met.

In March 1927 the Met revived Thomas's *Mignon*, in which Gigli was partnered by Bori. Although the revival was in the original French, the tenor chose to record his two arias in Italian. This is music congenial to a singer of Gigli's proclivities; his sensitivity to

dynamics and the lyric sheen on his voice are particularly appealing here. The refrain sections of *Ah, non credevi tu* are adroitly shaped. Another addition to his list was Alfredo's recitative and aria from the beginning of Act 2 of *Traviata*. Here, the incisiveness of Gigli's delivery of the recitative, becoming more lyrical at its expansive close, can serve as a model, and the aria spins along with tidy inflections.

As had been his practice since he began recording for Victor, Gigli turned again to the more popular Italian songs, in 1928 recording *Voce 'e notte* and *Canta pe' me* by De Curtis at the Liederkrantz Hall in New York, and the aria *O paradiso*, in Italian, from Meyerbeer's *L'africaine*.

In closing, I find it fitting to quote Max de Schauensee's estimate of Gigli, written in 1965: 'Some of the more fastidious critics correctly cited stylistic lapses and emotional excesses ... But nobody ever made the mistake of questioning the unrivalled beauty of Gigli's voice, which ultimately swept everything before it. Gigli died in Rome, after a brief illness, on 30th November 1957. One is on safe ground when stating that he has not been replaced.'

Adapted from notes by **William Ashbrook**

Producer's Note

The present volume is the fifth in a series devoted to Beniamino Gigli's "singles" - his song and aria recordings not issued as part of complete opera sets. The aim of the series is to include every Gigli recording released at the time, as well as every published alternate take and, wherever available, unpublished takes. The sides here are presented in the order in which they were recorded.

One divergence from the Peel and Holohan discography (published in *The Record Collector* in 1990) in the current volume concerns the absence of Item No. 101 on their list, a 1927 version of *M'appari* from *Martha*. Although the take listed in the discography was indeed recorded at the October 4th session, there is no indication that it was ever released. In any event, it would not have been issued on Victor 6446 as the discography claims, since this is the number of the double-faced acoustic version of the aria.

The "blue history cards" in the BMG Listings Department in New York (index cards which list, by issue number, the matrix and take numbers used for each published 78 rpm side) confirm that only three alternate takes of Gigli's Victor electrics were published on 78s, all dating from the ensembles recorded in November and December of 1927. Take 1 of *Enzo Grimaldo* with De Luca, Take 2 of *Giusto Cielo* with Pinza and the Met Chorus, and Take 1 of the *Rigoletto* Quartet were all substituted for the originally-issued takes in 1943, and only appeared on wartime and postwar American Victor issues.

In the case of the 1927 *Lucia* Tomb Scene, I have been able to combine the alternate issued take of part two with an unpublished take of part one and the only issued take of side three to form two complete (if not completely different) versions of the scene. (This also marks the only departure from strict recording-order sequence in these volumes. At the original session, all takes of part two were recorded first, followed by all takes of part three, so that Pinza and the chorus could be dismissed before Gigli essayed the solo aria which begins the scene.)

The selections on the current volume were originally issued in 1996 as part of Romophone 82004-2 ("Beniamino Gigli - The Complete Victor Recordings, Volume II: 1926-28"). In remastering my original transfers, I have tried to remove some of the clicks and pops that remained (both manually via digital editing and through the use of the CEDAR declipping module) and have made adjustments to the equalization of each track.

Mark Obert-Thorn

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

- BIZET: Les pêcheurs de perles:**
- 1 **Del tempio al limitar (Act 1)** 4:27
Giuseppe De Luca, baritone
Recorded 28th November 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41071-2
First issued on Victor 8084
- PONCHIELLI: La Gioconda:**
- 2 **Enzo Grimaldo, Principe di Santaflor! (Act 1)** 4:30
Giuseppe De Luca, baritone
Recorded 28th November 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41072-1
First issued on Victor 8084
- 3 **Enzo Grimaldo, Principe di Santaflor! (Act 1)** 4:25
Giuseppe De Luca, baritone
Recorded 28th November 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41072-2
First issued on Victor 8084
- DONIZETTI: Lucia di Lammermoor:**
- 4 **Tombe degl'avi miei (Act 3)** 5:01
Recorded 12th December 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41227-1
First issued on Victor 6876
- 5 **Giusto cielo, rispondete (Act 3)** 3:56
Ezio Pinza, bass; Metropolitan Opera Chorus
Recorded 12th December 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41225-1
First issued on Victor 8096
- 6 **Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali (Act 3)** 4:27
Ezio Pinza, bass; Metropolitan Opera Chorus
Recorded 12th December 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41226-1
First issued on Victor 8096
- 7 **Tombe degl'avi miei (Act 3)** 4:46
Recorded 12th December 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41227-2
Unpublished on 78 rpm
- 8 **Giusto cielo, rispondete (Act 3)** 3:54
Ezio Pinza, bass; Metropolitan Opera Chorus
Recorded 12th December 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41225-2
First issued on Victor 8096
- 9 **Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali (Act 3)** 4:27
Ezio Pinza, bass; Metropolitan Opera Chorus
Recorded 12th December 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41226-1
First issued on Victor 8096
- 10 **Chi mi frena in tal momento? (Act 2)** 4:24
Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano;
Louise Homer, contralto; Angelo Bada, tenor;
Giuseppe De Luca, baritone; Ezio Pinza, bass
Recorded 16th December 1927
in Liederkrantz Hall, New York
Matrix: CVE-41232-3
First issued on Victor 10012

VERDI: Rigoletto:		THOMAS: Mignon:	
[11] Bella figlia dell'amore (Act 3)	4:12	[15] Ah, non credevi tu (Act 3)	4:04
Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano; Louise Homer, contralto; Giuseppe De Luca, baritone Recorded 16th December 1927 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York Matrix: CVE-41233-1 First issued on Victor 10012		Recorded 30th November 1928 at 16 West 64th Street, New York Matrix: CVE-45121-3 First issued on Victor 6905	
VERDI: Rigoletto		[16] Addio, Mignon, fa core (Act 2)	
[12] Bella figlia dell'amore (Act 3)	4:26	Recorded 30th November 1928 at 16 West 64th Street, New York Matrix: CVE-45119-4 First issued on Victor 6905	
Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano; Louise Homer, contralto; Giuseppe De Luca, baritone Recorded 16th December 1927 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York Matrix: CVE-41233-3 First issued on Victor 10012		MEYERBEER: L'africaine:	
		[17] O paradiso (Act 4)	3:50
		Recorded 27th December 1928 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York Matrix: CVE-27531-5 First issued on Victor 7109	
MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:		DE CURTIS:	
[13] Viva il vino spumeggiante (Brindisi)	3:42	[18] Voce 'e notte	3:44
Metropolitan Opera Chorus Recorded 5th January 1928 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York Matrix: CVE-41298-2 First issued on Victor 8222		Recorded 27th December 1928 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York Matrix: CVE-49149-4 First issued on Victor 6925	
VERDI: La traviata:		DE CURTIS:	
[14] De' miei bollenti spiriti (Act 2)	4:16	[19] Canta pe' me	3:27
Recorded 8th May 1928 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York Matrix: CVE-45120-1 First issued on Victor 6876		Recorded 27th December 1928 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York Matrix: BVE-49150-4 First issued on Victor 1403	
		Tracks 1-3 and 14-19: Orchestra conducted by Rosario Bourdon	
		Tracks 4 - 13: Metropolitan Opera Orchestra conducted by Giulio Setti	



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ADD

Beniamino Gigli

The Gigli Edition, Vol. 5

Camden and New York Recordings 1927-28

 Playing
Time
79:07

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MADE IN
CANADA

- 1 **BIZET: Les pêcheurs de perles:** Del tempo al limitar *
- 2 **PONCHIELLI: La Gioconda:** Enzo Grimaldo, Principe di Santafior! * (Matrix: CVE-41072-1)
- 3 **PONCHIELLI: La Gioconda:** Enzo Grimaldo, Principe di Santafior! * (Matrix: CVE-41072-2)
- DONIZETTI: Lucia di Lammermoor:**
- 4 Tombe degl'avi miei (Matrix CVE-41227-1)
- 5 Giusto cielo, rispondete † (Matrix CVE-41225-1)
- 6 Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali † (Matrix CVE-41226-1) °
- 7 Tombe degl'avi miei (Matrix CVE-41227-2)
- 8 Giusto cielo, rispondete † (Matrix CVE-41225-2)
- 9 Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali † (Matrix CVE-41226-1) °
- 10 Chi mi frena in tal momento?
with Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano; Louise Homer, contralto;
Angelo Bada, tenor; Giuseppe De Luca, baritone; Ezio Pinza, bass
- 11 **VERDI: Rigoletto:** Bella figlia dell'amore ‡
(Matrix CVE-41233-1)
- 12 **VERDI: Rigoletto:** Bella figlia dell'amore ‡
(Matrix CVE-41233-3)
- 13 **MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:** Viva il vino spumeggiante
- 14 **VERDI: La traviata:** De' miei bollenti spiriti
- 15 **THOMAS: Mignon:** Ah, non credevi tu
- 16 **THOMAS: Mignon:** Addio, Mignon, fa core
- 17 **MEYERBEER: L'africane:** O paradiso
- 18 **DE CURTIS:** Voce 'e notte
- 19 **DE CURTIS:** Canta pe' me
* with Giuseppe De Luca • † with Ezio Pinza, bass
‡ with Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano; Louise Homer, contralto;
Giuseppe De Luca, baritone
° Please see Producer's Note

The present volume is the fifth in a series devoted to Beniamino Gigli's 'singles' - his song and aria recordings not issued as part of complete opera sets. The aim of the series is to include every Gigli recording released at the time, as well as every published alternative take and, wherever available, unpublished takes. The sides here are presented in the order in which they were recorded. For this Naxos series, restoration engineer Mark Obert-Thorn has remastered his original, critically-acclaimed Romophone transfers, cleaning them up further and re-doing some tracks in their entirety. Of special note in this fifth volume are Gigli's portrayal of Edgardo from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a rôle he sang 21 times at the Metropolitan Opera and arias from *Mignon* sung in Italian.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Ward Marston, Lawrence Holdridge, Jim Peters,
David Norbeck and Mark Ricaldone • Previously released on Romophone

www.naxos.com

A complete track list can be found in the booklet
Cover image: Gigli, Studio portrait, New York, circa 1922
(from the Mark Ricaldone photograph collection of Beniamino Gigli)

